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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN
SOUTH VIETNAM

(Information as of 1500 hours)

1 Nov 63

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THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM
(Information as of 1500 EST)

1. Gia Long, the redoubt of President Diem and Ngo Dinh Nhu, was under heavy attack in the early morning hours of Saturday in Saigon. Several heavy explosions were heard shortly after 0300 (1400 EST Friday in Washington.) These could have been explosive charges set against the Gia Long defenses

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2. Gia Long, which has been Diem's seat ever since the nearby Presidential Palace was bombed by aircraft in February, 1962, is a virtual fortress. Its grounds are defended by pillboxes and dug-in tanks, and the armament also includes 20-mm. cannon mounted on half-tracks. Diem has several hundred men of the Presidential Guard--possibly as many as 400--to defend Gia Long.

3. The coup leader, General "Big" Minh, overruling his associates, as of late last night was withholding any air strikes against the palace until daybreak, giving the defenders additional time to surrender. Ground action against the palace continued through the night, however, with the palace under fire from automatic weapons and 105-mm. artillery on all sides.

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9. The coup leaders, speaking as the "Generals' Councils," have declared martial law, applied a curfew, and announced that the students and monks detained by the Diem regime have been released. Their radiobroadcasts calling for public calm and support have included vigorous denunciations of the "rotten and dictatorial" Diem regime.

10. There is still no discernible reaction on the part of the Viet Cong; Radio Hanoi has only reported events without comment. We are aware, however, of previous Viet Cong plans to stage demonstrations and attempt to seize control of village councils in the event of any coup attempt against the Diem government. The Communists may also try to implement other contingency plans in the form of sabotage, propaganda, terrorism, or widespread attacks to draw attention to their strength and to exploit any confusion attending the coup.



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